



CHUCK LESNICK

Reports to the People



City Council President

Fall 2007

The general election is Nov. 6 and I urge voters to let their voices be heard. The Mayor and the odd-numbered Council Districts run this year, as do judges. There are also charter revision proposals being offered.

While I am not telling people how to vote, I am personally against Proposal No. 1 on the ballot. It would require both the operating and capital budgets to be approved at the same time. This may not allow the Council enough time to properly review the capital budget and in my opinion is a mistake, and could possibly be a costly one at that.

Don't forget. Everyone's vote counts. It shows public officials that you care and are holding them accountable for their words and actions.

Very truly yours,

Chuck Lesnick
Council President



Budgets



Since our last newsletter, the City Council has passed one capital budget for \$67 million in February and one operating budget in June 2007 for \$859 million.

As we did last year, the Council lowered the Mayor's proposed 5 percent tax increase and increased funds to the public schools. As a result, the city was able to settle its contracts with the police, fire and teachers unions and the schools opened without any job actions this fall.

Due to our increasing capital debt, the Council requested that the administration stagger half of its proposed \$98 million capital improvements plan for 2007-08 and I am hopeful that it will be approved by the time you receive this newsletter.

New on the Waterfront

The water taxi (www.nywatertaxi.com) is running for commuters and weekend fall foliage tours. And the critically acclaimed restaurant X2O by Peter Kelly is now open on the restored Yonkers pier. There's also Belle Havana, a Cuban-French restaurant on Main St. Please see www.yonkersdwbid.com, www.southbroadwaybid.org and www.YonkersArts.org for more on Yonkers.



Proposed Downtown Revitalization

Our last newsletter talked about the \$3.1 billion proposal by Struever Fidelco Cappelli LLC (SFC) to transform downtown Yonkers via multiple proposals to bring new homes, office space and retailers to the area, as well as to daylight the Saw Mill River.

Council Real Estate Chairman Dennis Robertson and I work with SFC to make certain that their construction workers will be paid prevailing wages on the projects once they are approved and that local maintenance unions will be used once the projects are complete.

The Council's consultants drafted a "scope" for a Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (pDEIS) last spring after listening to extensive public comment and concern. SFC recently responded with a 3,000-page pDEIS. Our consultants are in the process of checking the document for completeness.

Planning for such a sizable project is a huge undertaking, as you can imagine. I would say, however, that the project is progressing at a good rate, especially considering its magnitude. We hope to start the official public discussions of the plan's merits soon. Check SFC's website for updated information and documents at www.sfcyonkers.com.

Yonkers' Green Policy Task Force

"Think Globally, Act Locally" is a slogan you will hear more and more in response to the environmental crisis.

The City Council responded to the call by creating a much-needed Green Policy Task Force (GPTF) on Earth Day this year. The group's goal is to work with city and community groups to adhere to the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement to reduce global warming and to improve the quality of our environment right here in Yonkers.

The Task Force includes all City Council members and community representatives from each of their districts, as well as representatives of the city administration. They include Lesnick (Bob Walters); McDow (Margaret Setterholm); Annabi (Nortrud Spero); Robertson (Loretta Miraglia); McLaughlin (Terry Joshi); Murtagh (Molly Roffman); Barbato (Mel Goldstein); Amicone (Joe D'Lando). We also have student representatives Sierra Bangari from Yonkers Public Schools and Hannah Lansburgh from Sarah Lawrence College.

We are already in the process of making



a difference. Soon, we'll know if our grant application to retrofit school bus emissions systems is approved. We are also about to survey neighborhoods regarding the recent summer seasonal ban on gas-powered leaf blowers.

A new position for a Green Policy Task Force Coordinator was approved in June and both the Council and the GPTF are waiting for the administration to make that hire. That person will help organize efforts and ensure implementation of necessary environmental policy changes

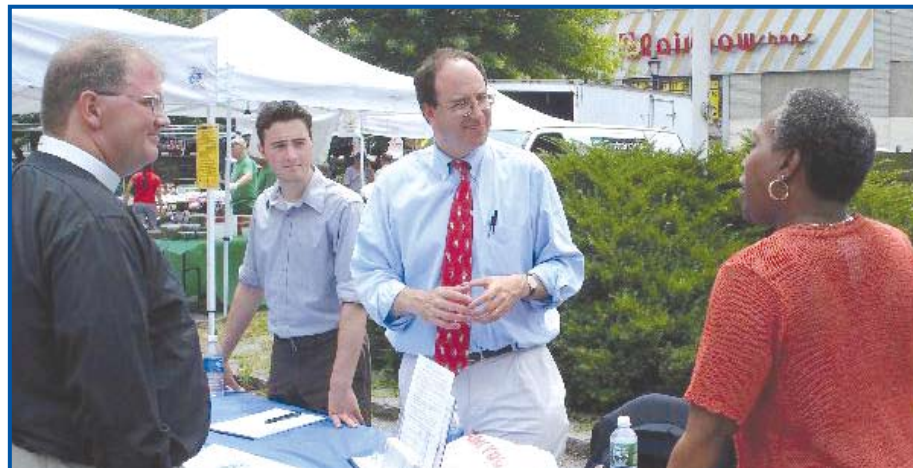
for Yonkers.

Real Estate Chairman Dennis Robertson, members of the GPTF and I recently attended Sustainable Hudson Valley's Municipal Leader's Summit on Global Warming to network with other municipalities and organizations in the Hudson Valley. We have since participated in local follow-up meetings with our Westchester neighbors to discuss and compare local environmental plans.

Farmer Lesnick

A funny thing happened on my way to the St. John's Farmer's Market in Getty Square this season.

What began as a shopping trip to buy fresh foods for my family at the request of my wife, Beth, the health-conscious doctor, became something very different.



I ended up with my own booth where instead of selling fruits and vegetables, I dished out advice and listened to residents discuss with me everything from downtown redevelopment plans to problems with their landlords.

Not only did I go back to work with a lot of ideas and suggestions on how to improve the city, but I brought home bags full of fresh cherries, corn, tomatoes, squash and more.

And I have a new name:
Farmer Lesnick.

I look forward to next year's crop of citizens. And zucchini.

Saving Our Historic Homes

The effort to save Yonkers' historic homes from demolition gained strength this summer after the 1873 Smith-Collins mansion on Palisades Ave. was razed by a developer. This called attention to 575 N. Broadway, pictured on right, another mansion headed for the same fate. This time, however, neighbors made an application to the Landmarks Board to verify its landmark status in hopes of preserving the home.



The City Council is currently revising a proposed Demolition Review Ordinance requiring notification to the Yonkers Landmarks Board whenever a demolition permit is requested for any property 75 years and older. The bill, originally crafted by the Yonkers Historical Society, has the support of Real Estate Chairman Dennis Robertson, Minority Leader Liam McLaughlin and me. I am hopeful the recent revisions will

soon gain the support of a few more Council members.

I have also suggested state legislation to require Public Administrators to notify local Landmarks Boards when these sorts of properties are put up for sale in proceedings before the

Surrogate's court.

For information on purchasing the home to preserve, please call my office at 914-377-6060. To preview the home online, go to www.richcohen@prudentialrand.com

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

My office and the City Council have officially recognized October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month by sending a strong and unwavering message to abusers that domestic violence will not be tolerated.

We held a candlelight vigil at City Hall on Wednesday, October 3 with My Sisters' Place, a non-profit organization that assists abused women, to raise public awareness of this problem that resulted in 1600 domestic incident reports in Yonkers during the first eight months of 2007.

Our mission is to spread awareness and to empower victims to protect themselves and their children against abuse. If someone you know needs help, please call The Yonkers Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit non-emergency line at 914-377-7900 and call My Sisters' Place Hotline at 1-800-298-SAFE.



Walkable Shopping Districts

Yonkers is known for its pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and old-fashioned shopping districts where storefronts, not parking lots, typically line sidewalks. But the newer city zoning codes encouraged the opposite: parking in front and stores in back.

The Council responded by approving a new zoning provision, known as Planned Neighborhood Commercial Developments (PNCD), to bring storefronts back to the sidewalk and put parking in back.

I agree with City planners who ultimately want the PNCD applied to all 25 shopping districts across the city. But first, the City Council voted to test it out along Saw Mill River Rd. on the former Lockwood Lumber site where the plan is for 20,000 square feet of shopping space.

As future proposals are made, the Council will review and evaluate each proposal to add new districts to the PNCD map.

Council Honors Students

Our initiative to honor students of high achievement at City Council meetings by asking them to lead the entire chamber in the Pledge of Allegiance as well having them sing the National Anthem and partake in other ceremonial events continues. This is a great way to formally recognize distinguished students' hard work. The following students have participated since our last publication:

1-9-07	Lucas Addo (Lincoln High School)
1-23-07	Rachael Johnson (Robert C. Dodson)
2-13-07	Gorton High School Unity Club
2-27-07	Isaiah Wilcox (School 29)
3-13-07	Allessandra Chiaramonte (Paideia School 15)
3-27-07	Jamil Haddad (School 23)
4-10-07	Girl Scout Troop 1807
4-24-07	Boy Scout Troop 32
5-8-07	Shannon May (Montessori School 31), Boy Scout Troop #5, and Pack #338
5-22-07	Aileen Medina (Enrico Fermi)
6-12-07	Alina Torres (Family School 32)
6-26-07	Lhomel Clark (Saunders High School), Paul Forlini (Boy Scouts Troop #5)



Orlando Arcadio receiving Proclamation.

9-10-07	Daniella Granata (School 22), Alyssa Marie Benjamin, National Anthem, (Sacred Heart High School)
9-25-07	Orlando Arcadio (Eugenio Maria de Hostos Microsociety School)
10-2-07	Special Meeting Natali Fields (Yonkers Christian Academy)
10-9-07	Junior Narvaez Membreno (School 13)

Former State Transportation Secretary to Work For Ridge Hill Ramp to Sprain Brook Parkway

The Ridge Hill Task Force selected Mary Ann Crotty as its manager to help build a ramp that would expand access to the Sprain Brook Parkway from Ridge Hill Village.

Crotty, a former Assistant Secretary of Transportation, has 25 years of experience managing funding and projects, including Director of State Operations and Policy Management for former Governor Mario Cuomo, who is a special advisor on the Ridge Hill Project.

Her position is part of a settlement in the lawsuit brought by the Town of Greenburgh, the Villages of Ardsley

and Hastings-on-Hudson against the development of Ridge Hill Village. Under the settlement ruled by Judge Barbara G. Zambelli, the task force was charged with engaging a manager to assist it in studying potential Sprain Brook Parkway access alternatives and obtaining the approvals required at the local, state and federal levels of government.

Mary Ann says her primary focus is on "analyzing the ramp proposal in terms of regional traffic solutions for regional transportation issues."



Upon her appointment, County Executive Andrew J. Spano said that he "looked forward to working with Mary Ann Crotty and Governor Cuomo to reach a consensus on a plan that benefits all citizens of Westchester County."

First Responders' Month

For many of us, September 11th serves as a constant reminder of the selfless actions of others when facing tragedy — especially those of our professional first responders.

To honor those men and women who risk their own lives on a daily basis to protect us, the Yonkers City Council declared September “First Responders’ Month.”

A special ceremony was held in City Council Chambers on September 10th to commend their work. The night started with the Yonkers Police Color Guard. Proclamations were given to the Yonkers Fire Department, the Yonkers Police Department and Empress Ambulance Service, as well as our very special guest,

Bruno, a K-9 officer who thoroughly enjoyed his bone and who brought a doggie bag back to his four-legged buddies on the force. His handler, Police Officer Michael O’Brien, works in the Emergency Services Unit.



Join Us For Quality of Life Day

If you or someone you know needs help navigating a problem, please mark your calendar for our second bi-annual Quality of Life Day on Saturday, October 27, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Riverfront Library.

City residents can plan to meet and talk with professionals from dozens of non-profit and government agencies to help address issues such as housing, health, legal counseling, domestic violence, job opportunities, and senior assistance, and more. Additionally, the Yonkers Police Department will provide fingerprinting for children and the Yonkers Fire Department will teach fire safety techniques in their smoke house. And the Looking Glass Players, a small theater company, will be performing an interactive play on domestic violence and elder abuse at Noon.

“It’s this kind of direct personal contact that can really help people who perhaps don’t know where to turn,” says Carol Bengis, my constituent affairs liaison who helped conceive of the event after fielding calls for help to my office.



The Living Wage: Because Yonkers Deserves a Raise

In February 2007, the City Council passed the original version of the Living Wage Bill by a vote that was split along party lines, 4-3 with the Democratic Majority’s support (Lesnick, McDow, Robertson & Annabi). The Mayor vetoed the bill one month later.

The City Council will reintroduce a revised version of the bill that applies to employees who work for city service contractors and subcontractors; to workers at sites subject to a City lease or concession; and to employers and their tenants who receive significant tax abatements or other financial incentives from the city. There will be exemptions and protections for small businesses and non-profits.

The Majority on the City Council believes that the workers of Yonkers deserve an hourly wage that puts them above the poverty line.

Newsletter edited by: Laura Fahrenthold and Rachele “Rocky” Richard



**Office of the Yonkers
City Council President**

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REPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

The Council President's Office

I was recently asked by a student at the Patricia A. DiChiaro School if being City Council "principal" meant I could put other council members in detention.

Believe me, sometimes we all feel like we've been put in detention when the Council meetings go into extra innings.

Nevertheless, the student's question did bring up a good point in that not everyone knows what the different branches of the local government do. Here's a brief explanation.

In the City Council President's office, the council is responsible for reviewing and approving as annual operating budget of \$859 million each year and a capital improvement budget of \$67 million over the same

period of time. (The budget changes yearly and more than half of each budget funds the school system.)

We make land use decisions including zone changes for economic development projects throughout the city and pass laws to improve the quality of life of our residents. The Council President also functions as a check and balance to the mayor and his administration and serves as an ombudsman to help residents navigate bureaucracy to obtain the services to which they are entitled.

All of this is done with the support of my staff.



Carol Bengis (Constituent Affairs Liaison/Office Manager)

Samantha Wapnick (Legislative Assistant/Hispanic Community Outreach)

Dwanita M. Crosby (Executive Assistant)

Council President Chuck Lesnick

Rachelle "Rocky" Richard (Chief of Staff)

Laura Fahrenthold (Director of Communications)

Richard Marmolejos (Legislative Assistant)